



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Elias Howe School**

**Elementary School 051**

**520 West 45 Street  
New York  
New York 10036**

**Principal: Nancy Sing-Bock**

**Dates of review: November 5 – 7, 2007**

**Lead Reviewer: Roger Brown**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Elias Howe is an elementary school with 337 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 18% Black, 54% Hispanic, 13% White, and 15% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 92.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 66% eligibility.

The school serves an area of the city with a high turnover in population. This turbulence is beginning to reduce with the recent closure of a number of temporary housing shelters. Nevertheless, there is still a significant movement of students in and out of the school. Many of the students moving in to the school have, for a variety of reasons, suffered from disrupted education, and a few, starting at the school in the higher grades, have had no previous educational experience.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal, school's leaders and teachers create an excitement about learning that captivates everyone associated with the school.
- Teachers show great respect for their students and this courtesy is reflected back in the students' enjoyment of their learning and their good behavior.
- The school's leaders give exceptional support to teachers in the use of data through professional development, and two-monthly progress meetings.
- The excellent quality of professional development for staff supports the development of teachers' instruction, and thus improves the students' learning.
- The curriculum is dynamic and exciting, with a strong emphasis on the arts and science that broadens students' horizons considerably.
- Carefully planned and well taught differentiated instruction contributes significantly to students' successful achievements.
- Parents are welcomed into the school and are given every possible support to enable them to become effective partners in promoting their children's learning.
- The principal uses the budget strategically and to great effect to ensure that the school's priorities are not just accommodated, but achieve maximum impact.
- The school's many partnerships and alliances broaden students' horizons and enrich their learning.
- The school's dynamic and flexible system for creating and developing relevant goals and targets is one of its areas of exemplary practice.

### What the school needs to improve

- Take the next step in developing the monitoring systems by creating an easy to use system to track and study students' progress across the whole school.
- Test the ideas of the inquiry team for improving students' progress, and exploit teachers' interest in these concepts by developing an "action research" program.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is well developed.**

This is a dynamic and exciting school community. Everyone, students, their parents, all the staff and teachers, are actively involved in learning at every level. The students and their parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate all that it offers. They can't get enough of the highly successful enrichment program that motivates pupils and secures their commitment.

Teachers strive to get the very best outcomes for all their students. Staff are creative in achieving this. They seek out and build partnerships from as many sources as possible, enriching the students' lives and learning. A notable feature of the school is the development of highly effective systems to monitor and evaluate students' progress. The leadership has taken great care to use the issues identified at the last review to extend and refine systems. They want to make them even more effective by tracking students' progress at grade and whole school level systematically over time.

There is a great team spirit throughout the school. Staff at all levels are happy to question the effectiveness of what they are doing. They debate the issues with each other and are keen to innovate and try new ideas and practices. They report that they get outstanding support from the leadership, coupled with high-quality professional development. Teachers are held constantly accountable for the progress of the students in their care. The leadership and the teachers make very thoughtful use of data to get very good levels of progress for almost all students. The school has established exemplary practice in supporting the teachers' development of differentiated instruction. Teachers, aided by highly effective specialist staff, and supported by thoughtful systems and processes, help students at all levels of development to achieve well. It is those transient students who arrive from other schools, or who, because of circumstances, have only a short time at the school, who make least progress.

The recently-established inquiry team has made a good start and formed a number of hypotheses about the needs of the students that they want to test. The teachers are supportive of these ideas and keen to be involved in the work. The leadership understands the need to exploit this work systematically to achieve maximum benefits from it and is keen to use "action research", a carefully structured set of questions, to do so.

## **How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria**

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The principal and her leadership team have created excellent systems to support teachers in using data. Each classroom and grade get really clear information, but it is not easy to use the system to get a whole school picture. Every step of the students' development is carefully analyzed and monitored. Systematic use of assessment and careful record-keeping by the teachers ensure that the progress of every child, including English language learners and special education students, is well known and accounted for. Each teacher has a progress meeting once every two months with the leadership and the specialist teachers. The teachers present the evidence of the progress that the students are making. Individuals and groups are discussed and analyzed in great depth. Questions are asked and suggestions made before there is agreement on the next steps. This allows the school to plan timely intervention strategies and ensure tiered support is directed to where it is most needed. As a result, teachers and students have a clear understanding of what they need to do and how they will achieve it.

Following the introduction of this carefully-structured system, students' achievements have improved, year-on-year, almost without exception, in every grade and subject. The school's progress is therefore rated very highly. However, because of the careful monitoring, when the exceptions occur, as they did this year, the school responds quickly and prevents the situation from deteriorating. A small decline in students' achievement in English language arts was immediately picked up and analyzed. The school had believed that the improvement in the students' skill levels meant that they could move away from the very tightly structured program they had in place. The analysis showed that this was not the case, so the school is re-introducing the full program for guided reading.

With so much information collected, the school's paperwork is becoming unwieldy. Teachers conscientiously pass information from grade to grade, but it is time consuming to quiz this and cumbersome to store. The leadership and teachers recognize this needs streamlining. They are working on a system that will give the teachers a clear overview of students' progress and development over a longer period than just that of their current grade. It is planned to be flexible enough to cover the wealth of information that they already collect and be robust enough for teachers to be able to quiz it in depth.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The great teamwork from all staff ensures that the collaborative goal-setting process in this school is very rigorous and highly effective. Teachers use data from assessments in combination with their classroom observations to check constantly that students know what they are doing and are developing their skills and understanding at an appropriate rate. They are particularly successful at moving on those students in greatest need of improvement. In the words of one student, "The teachers always challenge you - they

want to know if you can do more, and they are always finding out where we can improve.” The students are not put off by this, they are motivated by it.

This is an open and hospitable school. Parents report that they are always welcomed into the school and are given every possible support to enable them to become effective partners in promoting their children’s learning. They get good information about what students are going to learn. This is followed by excellent feedback on how well each is doing. Everyone recognizes that the school has high expectations for what the students can achieve.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

Teacher observations of the students and data drive all aspects of instruction. Teachers use the information thoughtfully to plan and engage the students in their learning. They are always willing to take on new ideas and often then extend and develop these to make their instruction even more effective. In a math class, the teacher used a planning and assessment tool from the professional development she had received in literacy, and, because it worked so well, adjusted it to accommodate another subject area as well.

Carefully planned and well supported differentiated instruction contributes significantly to the successful achievements of the students. The classrooms work well because teachers show respect for the students, and this courtesy is reflected back in the students’ enjoyment of their learning and their good behavior.

The school does not just promote engaging instruction; it also ensures that the curriculum is dynamic and exciting as well. A strong emphasis on the arts and science broadens students’ horizons very effectively. This year, the school has joined the *Hudson River Project*. Students and teachers, helped by parents, have joined with 30 other schools situated along the length of the river, to carry out an environmental survey. This work has created a real and very enjoyable learning experience for everyone.

The school has an ambitious program of extra-curricular activities and visits which give the students valuable insights into a whole range of areas. The parents applaud all that the school does, but they would like if possible for the school to find even more ways of building in enrichment activities. “They really motivate my son and make him excited about school,” reported one parent.

The principal uses the budget very well to ensure that the school’s priorities make a real difference to students. For example, extra time purchased for the guidance and support staff has created and sustained the peer mentoring system. This is praised and held in high esteem by the students and their parents.

Inventive and creative ways to encourage parents to attend school functions and students to be at school on time help to motivate and inspire the students. Faced with a tardiness problem in the older grades, the school is currently running a competition with the local branch of a national parcel delivery company to see who can be the best time -keepers. If the school gets a greater proportion of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders to school on time the company will hold a party for the students. However, if the company can deliver a greater proportion

of its parcels before eight o'clock, then the teachers, the students and their parents will visit the company to help them clean their equipment.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

Teachers receive high-quality training and the rigorous follow-up of regular professional conferences about their classes with the administration. This enables teachers to make thoughtful strategic decisions about the progress and development of individual students and the groups in which they work.

This busy school is short of space. Every available room has multiple uses. However, this only makes the school function more smoothly. Everyone co-operates with each other. The extraordinary teamwork from the staff is reflected in the excellent attitudes and understanding of the students. A grade 5 student commented, "This is a diverse community, but there is no racism here, we value what we all bring and we want to share with each other."

The teachers, students and parents all see themselves as an important part of their local community. They actively participate in a very wide range of activities. There are beneficial partnerships with other schools, colleges, education service providers, health service providers, theatre and arts groups, local block associations and local businesses.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

All the adults devote a great deal of time and energy into developing the students as lifelong learners who want to take responsibility for their own lives and play an active part in their community. The school has very effective systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of its goals and plans on the development of students and teachers alike. Every effort is invested into ensuring that each student is given the opportunity to shine in whatever area their particular skills and achievements lie.

Following the recommendations of the last review, the school has analyzed its data in even greater depth. The patterns of achievement that emerged from this analysis are now being used to modify instruction to make it even more effective. The use of periodic interim assessments enables teachers to assess how well students are doing, and to make modifications to plans and instruction as required.

The principal and the school community are ambitious. They have their vision of where they want the school to go and a clear understanding of the steps they need to take along the way. The staff are excellent role models for the students in all respects. Their dedication to learning and their commitment to improving their own practice exemplify what individuals can do. The strength of their teamwork is a great example of what a community can achieve.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Elias Howe School (PS 51)</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.</b>					
<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X		
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?				X	
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?					X
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?					X
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?					X
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				<b>X</b>	

<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction?					X
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?					X
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another's instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?					X
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?					X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				<b>X</b>	

<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to make strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?					X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				<b>X</b>	